

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1 1. A communications method comprising:

2 enabling instant messaging communication between a sender and at least one

3 recipient through an instant messaging host; and

4 enabling voice communication between the sender and the recipient through the instant  
5 messaging host.

1 2. The method of claim 1 further comprising receiving and authenticating a text instant  
2 message from the sender at the instant messaging host.

1 3. The method of claim 2 wherein authenticating the text instant message comprises  
2 identifying a screen name associated with at least one of the sender and the recipient.

1 4. The method of claim 2 wherein authenticating the test instant message comprises  
2 identifying an IP address associated with at least one of the sender and the recipient.

1 5. The method of claim 1 further comprising determining capabilities of the recipient at the  
2 instant messaging host.

1 6. The method of claim 5 wherein determining capabilities comprises identifying hardware  
2 associated with the recipient.

1 7. The method of claim 5 wherein determining capabilities comprises identifying software  
2 associated with the recipient.

1 8. The method of claim 5 further comprising reporting the capabilities of the recipient to the  
2 sender.

1 9. The method of claim 8 wherein the sender displays a user interface according to the  
2 capabilities of the recipient.

1 10. The method of claim 1 further comprising receiving, at the instant messaging host, a  
2 request to establish voice communication.

1 11. The method of claim 10 wherein the request is from the sender.

1 12. The method of claim 10 wherein the request is from the recipient.

1 13. The method of claim 10 further comprising authenticating the request.

1 14. The method of claim 11 wherein authenticating the request comprises identifying  
2 a screen name associated with at least one of the sender and the recipient.

1 15. The method of claim 11 wherein authenticating the request comprises identifying  
2 an IP address associated with at least one of the sender and the recipient.

1 16. The method of claim 1 wherein enabling voice communication comprises establishing a  
2 generic signaling interface channel, a control channel, and an audio channel between the  
3 sender and the recipient.

1 17. The method of claim 16 further comprising attempting a mode UDP test on the audio  
2 channel.

1 18. The method of claim 16 wherein the control channel comprises a TCP/IP socket.

1 19. The method of claim 16 wherein the audio channel comprises a UDP channel.

1 20. The method of claim 16 wherein the audio channel comprises a TCP channel.

1 21. A communications apparatus comprising an instant messaging host configured to:  
2 enable instant messaging communication between a sender and at least one recipient;  
3 and  
4 enable voice communication between the sender and the recipient.

1 22. A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium, comprising instructions  
2 for:

3 enabling instant messaging communication between a sender and at least one  
4 recipient through an instant messaging host; and

5 enabling voice communication between the sender and the recipient through the  
6 instant messaging host.

1 23. The computer program of claim 22 wherein the computer readable medium is a disc.

1 24. The computer program of claim 22 wherein the computer readable medium is a client  
2 device.

1 25. The computer program of claim 22 wherein the computer readable medium is a host  
2 device.

1 26. The computer program of claim 22 wherein the computer readable medium is a  
2 propagated signal.